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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of fifteen members of the Human Rights Council

Letter dated 1 May 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to inform you that Burkina Faso has declared its candidacy for election to a seat on the Human Rights Council for the period 2008-2011, in the elections to be held in New York on 16 May 2008.

The Group of African States has officially endorsed Burkina Faso's candidacy on behalf of the West African States.

Burkina Faso wishes to help strengthen the efforts of the States Members of the United Nations to promote and protect all human rights for all. These rights form the cornerstone of the country's policy.

Accordingly, it pledges to pursue this aim at the national, regional and international levels.

I am transmitting herewith a document setting out Burkina Faso's voluntary pledges and achievements with respect to human rights (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Michel **Kafando**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 1 May 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Candidacy of Burkina Faso for a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council

Burkina Faso declares its candidacy for a seat on the Human Rights Council for the period 2008-2011.

The Group of African States has officially endorsed Burkina Faso's candidacy on behalf of the West African States.

The promotion and protection of human rights are the cornerstones of Burkina Faso's policy.

This interest springs from a strong desire to strengthen the rule of law, fundamental rights and individual freedoms, and is given its highest expression in the Constitution's enshrinement of human rights as founding values of the State.

The preamble to the Constitution expresses the endorsement by the people of Burkina Faso of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international instruments on political, economic, social and cultural rights, and solemnly reaffirms their commitment to the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Title I of the Constitution deals with basic human rights and duties.

These constitutional principles were the inspiration for Burkina Faso's national policy and for its action plan and policy plan setting out the six guiding principles for Government action to promote and protect human rights. These are: human rights education; strengthening of the legal framework; adaptation of domestic legislation to the international instruments that Burkina Faso has ratified; strengthening, consolidation and protection of civil and political rights; strengthening, consolidation and protection of economic, social and cultural rights; and protection of the rights of specific groups.

The principles underpinning the Constitution and national policy have given rise to a legal framework that covers all areas related to human rights and have resulted, inter alia, in the emergence of a dynamic civil society.

With a view to further protecting human rights and individual and collective rights and ensuring the implementation, follow-up and strengthening of its human rights policies and actions, the State has established a Ministry for the Promotion of Human Rights.

The Ministry is also responsible for the implementation of specific measures to promote, strengthen and protect the rights of specific groups: women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities, among others.

Burkina Faso has concluded a number of bilateral agreements on a variety of subjects, such as trafficking in children and child labour, trafficking in persons, etc.

At the regional level Burkina Faso is actively involved in efforts to promote and protect human rights. Since its accession to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and to various regional instruments, Burkina Faso has been a

regular participant in the work of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, which it chaired from 2003 to 2007.

Within the United Nations, Burkina Faso has always conducted itself as a responsible State that honours its commitments and obligations and stands ready to play a proactive, constructive role. Accordingly, it has participated in a number of fact-finding and outreach missions of the Special Committee on Decolonization, of which it has been an active member.

Burkina Faso is a party to the major human rights conventions adopted under the auspices of the United Nations. It signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto, as well as the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, after having participated fully in the negotiations on both instruments.

Having been elected twice to serve as a member of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Burkina Faso contributed actively to the work and the deliberations of that international body to monitor the implementation of human rights throughout the world.

Burkina Faso strongly supported the establishment of the Human Rights Council and takes part in its sessions as an observer.

Considering that the Human Rights Council plays a vital role in promoting universal respect for and protection of all human rights and individual freedoms, its work would undoubtedly be enriched by the above-mentioned experiences if Burkina Faso were elected to the Council.

Because Burkina Faso is irreversibly committed to the rule of law, it staunchly upholds the principles of democracy, social justice and the protection of human rights. If elected to the Human Rights Council, it will contribute transparently and effectively to the Council's work.

Accordingly, Burkina Faso pledges to continue and to intensify its efforts, policy and activities to protect and promote human rights at the national, regional and international levels by means of the following actions, among others:

- Support for the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights;
- Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto, adopted on 13 December 2006;
- Ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, adopted on 20 December 2006;
- Continued efforts to stop trafficking in children and child labour;
- An ongoing commitment to the campaign to prevent the involvement of children in armed conflict;
- Intensified efforts at the national level to combat the practice of female genital mutilation;
- Measures to strengthen its policy for protecting the rights of specific groups;

– Continued efforts to carry out widespread educational initiatives on human rights and fundamental freedoms;

– Increased efforts to ensure that perpetrators of human rights violations do not go unpunished.

In order to achieve these aims and succeed in this common endeavour, Burkina Faso requests the General Assembly to support its candidacy.